

KEEPING YOUR DISTANCE

It is extremely important that a rider maintain an adequate cushion of space between vehicles. Increasing the distance between vehicles will provide the rider with additional time that may be needed to safely avoid a traffic hazard. The experienced rider recognizes that space is the best protection against being seriously injured or killed in a motor vehicle accident.

DISTANCE IN FRONT

Motorcycles do not require the same stopping distance as other motor vehicles. However, it is recommended that riders subscribe to the “two-second” distance rule developed to help riders avoid potentially dangerous situations. On the road ahead, pick a fixed object like a sign post or tree. When the vehicle in front of you reaches that object, count out “one one-thousand, two one-thousand.....”. If you reach the object before you count two, you are following too closely. Slow down until you have put enough distance between you and the other vehicle. This rule provides riders with additional reaction time that may be needed to address adverse traffic conditions.

A larger cushion of space may be needed if the traffic and road conditions are unfavorable to the rider. If the area of travel is unfamiliar, heavily congested, or the pavement is slippery, it is recommended that riders subscribe to a “four-second” (or more) distance rule. This added cushion of distance is valuable and may be necessary given the traffic conflict or hazard facing the rider.

DISTANCE BEHIND

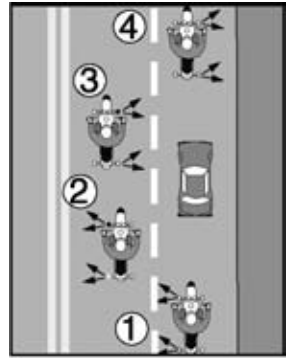
Many motorcycle riders acknowledge that vehicles travel too closely behind. Should this tailgating situation arise, increase the stopping distance between the vehicles ahead to ensure that a proper space cushion exists in the event of an emergency or traffic hazard. If the opportunity presents itself, change vehicle lanes allowing the motorist’s vehicle to safely pass.

DISTANCE TO THE SIDE

Because of vehicle size, motorcycle riders have the unique ability to change positions within their lane of travel while managing space to the sides, thus creating a greater cushion of space. This added flexibility offers the rider an opportunity to maintain the margin of safety required for safe operation. An experienced and responsible rider changes positions as traffic conditions change. The following are situations that may require a change in lane position.

PASSING

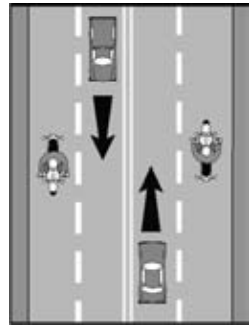
When attempting to pass a vehicle, position the cycle in the left portion of the travel lane at a safe following distance to increase rider visibility. Prior to activating your signals, check for on-coming traffic and potential road hazards. When there is sufficient space, use vehicle mirrors and a quick “head-check” to gauge traffic conditions behind and to the sides of the motorcycle before signaling and accelerating to the desired lane of travel. Quickly pass through the operator’s blind spot. Once safely past the vehicle, again use vehicle mirrors and “head-checks” to gauge traffic conditions before signaling and returning to your original lane of travel.



Passing

BEING PASSED

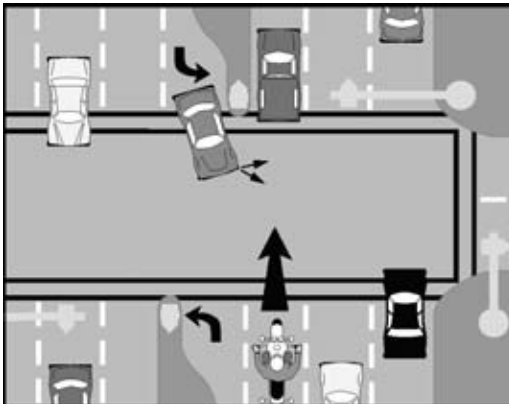
When being passed by a vehicle, position the cycle in the center of the travel lane. This added cushion of space prevents the rider from being sideswiped by passing vehicles or inadvertently struck by road objects and debris. Traveling in the center of the travel lane further protects the rider from wind shear or gusts created by larger vehicles which can significantly alter cycle control and stability.



Being passed

INTERSECTIONS

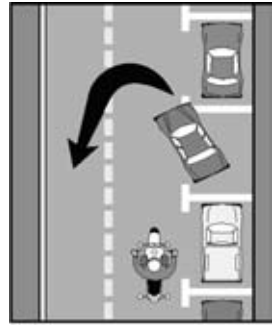
Statistically, intersections are one of the most dangerous areas of travel for motorcycle riders. When approaching an intersection, select a lane position that increases cycle visibility. If a vehicle can enter your path of travel at an intersection, assume that it will. Remain alert and search for vehicles turning ahead or into your path of travel. Pass with caution and adjust cycle speed to a level that promotes safe and responsible operation.



Intersections

PARKED VEHICLES

When passing parked vehicles, position the cycle in the left portion of the travel lane to avoid problems caused by either operators exiting their vehicles or pedestrians stepping between vehicles. Cautiously approach vehicles pulling away from curbs or parking spaces. The potential for injury with vehicles making U-turns presents yet another danger to the rider. To increase rider safety, maintain an adequate space cushion and maximize the benefits of lane position.



Parked vehicles

LANE SHARING

It is recommended that motorcycle riders avoid sharing lanes with other vehicles. All motor vehicles are permitted to use the full lane of travel to ensure safe operation. Motorcycle riders are prohibited from riding alongside motor vehicles within a marked travel lane. Position the cycle in the center of the travel lane to discourage motorists from attempting to squeeze by the cycle. Motorists are more prone to this type of behavior when traveling in heavy traffic, passing vehicles, turning, and entering or exiting highways. Further, a responsible rider recognizes the potential for injury and avoids traveling between rows of stopped motor vehicles.

CARS ALONGSIDE

It is recommended that motorcycle riders avoid riding alongside other motor vehicles. Experienced riders recognize that vehicles traveling in the adjacent lane may unexpectedly change direction forcing the rider into a potentially dangerous situation. Adjust cycle speed until a proper and adequate cushion of space has been established between vehicles.

MERGING TRAFFIC

Do not assume that the operator of a motor vehicle will recognize your presence when merging onto a highway. Minimize the potential for danger by providing ample space to those motor vehicles entering your path of travel.



Merging traffic

DANGEROUS SURFACES

Slippery and uneven surfaces, obstacles, railroad tracks, and grooves or gratings can significantly affect motorcycle traction and balance. Riders should avoid traveling on surfaces that provide poor traction.

SLIPPERY SURFACES



Wet pavement, mud, snow and ice covered roads, lane markings, steel plates, and manhole covers are all examples of surfaces that provide poor traction to the rider. To reduce the risk of being injured while traveling on slippery surfaces, a rider can take certain preventative measures.

Reducing cycle speed on slippery surfaces is one preventative measure. A rider must recognize that slowing or stopping on slippery surfaces requires greater distance. When road conditions are unfavorable, it is particularly important that a rider further reduce cycle speed prior to entering a curve where skidding and loss of control are more probable.

Avoiding sudden moves on slippery surfaces is a second preventative measure. A sudden change in direction or speed may result in a cycle skid or loss of control, exposing the rider to even greater harm. On slippery surfaces, a rider should focus on accelerating, shifting gears, turning, and braking as smoothly as possible. If the slippery surface is small enough to safely traverse, riders are encouraged to hold in the motorcycle's clutch until safely past the hazard.

Using both the front and rear brakes on slippery surfaces is a third preventative measure. A rider should have confidence in using the front brake even on slippery surfaces. Applying the brakes gradually will help prevent the wheels from locking and skidding. When traveling over icy surfaces, a rider should avoid braking until safely past the hazard.

Experienced riders consistently search for the best possible pavement to travel. On slippery surfaces, riders should use added caution and aggressively search for hazards that may interfere with the safe operation of the motorcycle. Adjusting lane position and cycle speed may be necessary and prudent when surfaces are slippery. A good rider must be able to recognize the following surface hazards:

- When traveling on wet pavement, it is recommended that riders follow in the wheel tracks of motor vehicles ahead. Center lane travel may be hazardous due to the accumulation of oil left on the surface by passing motor vehicles. Riders should use added caution when approaching intersections and toll-booths.
- When stopping or parking the cycle, be sure to search for oil spots that may cause feet to slip. Securing the proper footing will help prevent riders from losing their balance or falling.
- When approaching intersections, curves, or freeway entrance and exit ramps, be certain to remain away from the road's edge where dirt and gravel often collect. Choose a lane position that minimizes the risk of injury. Further recognize that rain, snow, and ice covered surfaces pose a hazard until completely dry.

VERY SLIPPERY AREAS

It is strongly recommended that riders avoid snow and ice covered surfaces. Experienced riders recognize that maintaining balance and cycle control are difficult on such surfaces. However, should the rider be unable to avoid such a surface, keep the cycle straight up and proceed as slowly as possible, with feet skimming the surface for added balance should the cycle begin to fall. If riding is impractical in sections, consider "straddle-walking" the motorcycle to a more suitable surface.